OPINION

As the Post said . . .

the summer this wspaper was pressing land reclamation jects in North Kent. We d then:

"All over Kent there is d lying idle — misused l abused by past and sent industry — that uld become productive ain."

We suggested: "Reclation processes could applied to the vast acres redundant Ministry of fence land."

We added: "There is no od reason why large ale reclamation should be adopted in Kent, ticularly in the north."

And we concluded: here is surely a case for nt County and local trict councils to give ious consideration the pointment of a land lamation officer of our n."

A county council report nsidered by Medway uncillors last night says t the borough has the cond largest proportion derelict land in Kent, d it urges that special as of priority should be gled out for land lamation.

The report said that amples of derelict land ich could be cleared up luded Medway's military tifications — Fort Luton, rt Horsted and Fort dgewood.

And Councillor Tony heeler, Chairman of the ncil's housing services mmittee, asked if there s a plan to appoint a land lamation officer for nt.

Said Councillor Wheeler: t's make the best use of s because we've got the portunity to use this land benefit people." It dly seems necessary for o add: "Hear, hear,".

omes people an afford

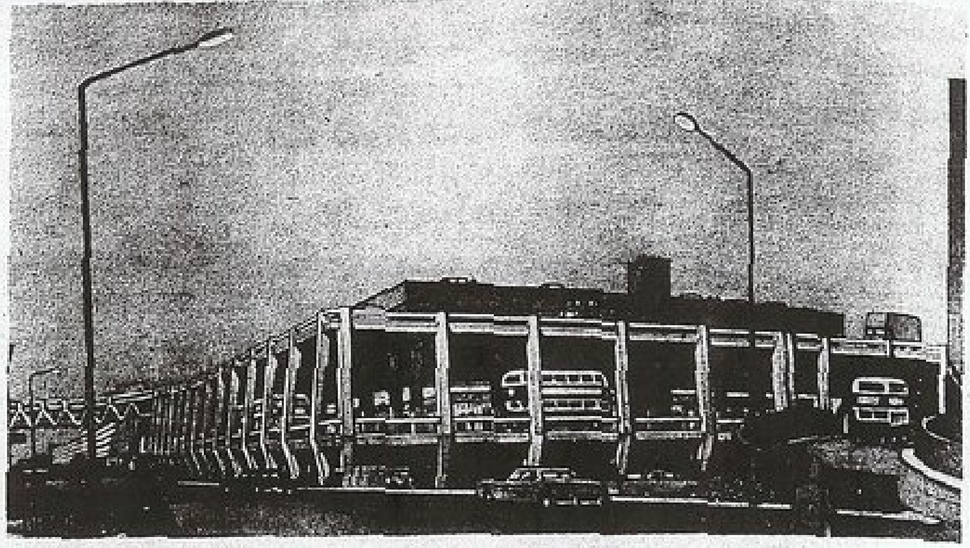
VIRONMENT Secretary Anthony Crosland mises an early unveiling new plans to speed up nes building.

Scepticism would seem e in order.

Successive governments e produced successive gic wands to wave over eadily worsening homes ation. Each has proved e no more able to solve problem than any of the ers.

oo often we have been

This is what the Pentagon Centre will look like. And it will not be the expensive folly knockers predicted. Work is dead on schedule, all shops have been let and those involved are certain that it will be a success.



PENTAGON: ALL SYSTEMS GO!

Keiron Wood charts the progress of Medway's unique shopping complex

EVER since the idea of the Pentagon Centre was conceived 11 years ago, the knockers have been prophesying disaster.

Chatham can't afford it, it's too big, it blots the skyline, it's *liable to flooding*, it will bankrupt small traders, they've said.

The criticisms have slight basis in fact.

The £12 million scheme has had teething problems, but construction is on *schedule* and the complex will open next year.

The multi - storey development, bordered by Chatham High Street, Military Road and The Brook is the most ambitious single building project ever undertaken in the Medway Towns.

When complete, it will include an air - conditioned shopping precinct on two *levels, a bus station, offices* and a 1200 - space multi - storey car park.

The nine - acre complex will also include exhibition and display areas, restaurants, cafes, a public house, library and entertainment complex.

Those who predicted that Pentagon rents would be too expensive for traders have been put in their place. Every single shop unit has already been let, with Boots, C & A and Sainsburys taking the lion's share.

Other nationally - known companies have leased the smaller stores. Only the pub *now remains to be let.*

Environmentalists' complaints about the stark design of the Pentagon are rejected by the architect, Mr Peter Perry, who spent four months designing an alternative scheme before hitting on the final plan.

He designed the complex in three parts.

Phase One, comprising the multi - storey car park for 700 cars, is already in use.

The second phase, perhaps the most spectacular piece of construction work visible to the public, was the casting of the cranked columns along the *Brook, flanking one side of the* bus depot.

The circular bus depot, curling around the shopping complex on the first floor, will be used by local and long distance buses. Passengers waiting can sit comfortably in a cafe or restaurant, with the nearest bus stops only yards away.

Stage three comprised nine storeys of offices above four storeys of shops — the most *conspicuous part of the* Pentagon.

This "blot on the skyline" was designed to be as aesthetically pleasing as any 13 - storey building can be. The concrete sections are calcined flint in white cement. Unlike ordinary concrete, they should stay white, even in heavy rain.

The bricks, from a local brick works, are cemented *with a special red mortar* which is set half an inch below the face of the brick to give a patterned effect. So far, 3,365,606 bricks have been used in the construction of the development.

Flood warnings are taken seriously by the builders. After all, The Brook derives its name from the stream which flowed along it to the Medway.

So the whole development *has been constructed on huge* concrete piles with thousands of tons of concrete and reinforced steel keeping the Pentagon high above any possible flooding.

And in case of once - in - a - lifetime floods, there are thre subsidiary systems for clea ing the complex of an floodwater which should lea in.

Pentagon traders an *shoppers are not the only on* who will benefit from th scheme.

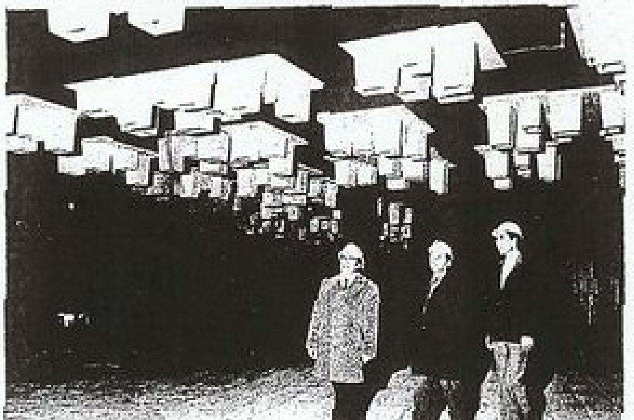
Already, traders in Cha ham High Street — which w eventually be pedestrianise — are having goods delivere through their own loadin bays on the Pentagon's level four service deck.

Pedestrianisation will be a important feature of th overall scheme as soon as th finances are available Medway Council.

But, with all these uniq and expensive features, ca Medway afford the Pentagon

Chief executive Roy H says: "We have afforded The most expensive *parts* the scheme — the purchase the land and the building of th car park — have already be paid for.

"Medway can afford to pa *the rest of* our share. A remember, when the Pent gon opens, we will get thr quarters of the rent, le deductions, all charges fro the car park plus, of cours rates on the development."



Keeping an eye on progress on ground floor shopping precinct are (from left) Bob Smith, chairman of Medway's development services committee, chief Hill Hall and construction manager John Lefley.

MY WORD!

THE evil sadist dressed up as a games master paid no heed to the danger of causing me permanent pyschological damage as I lay, legs locked in combat with those of the vaulting horse which which I had somehow contrived to pull over on top of me soccer but that was only because we had Alan Ball in our team and therefore never lost a game and you don't change a winning side do you?

Soccer apart, I was very much second eleven throughout my school life.

And that, according to one of those silly reports people will keep turning out, could have *given me a feeling of* rejection and life-long bitterness.

A top school physical

Triumph was the emotion I felt, not bitterness or rejection.

I was comfortable, warm and dry while the "winners" stood around looking very silly with mountainous goose pimples, going blue with cold, shivering from head to toe and dripping wet.

They were the losers — not me.

Batting at Number 10 in the second eleven at cricket also

shady prefect with access his father's car who did n take his responsibilities as course marshall too serioul and was susceptible to offe he didn't even try to refuse.

For a collective donation cash, fags and girl magazines we were able secure top secret mot transport over two thirds the gruelling five mile course

The shame lingers because